

Small Cities Quarterly
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DECD receives many questions from clients.
Here are DECD's responses to some frequently asked questions:

Q. How many grants can I apply for each year?

A. DECD is requesting that towns apply for one grant at a time and expend a good percentage before moving on to another grant. DECD does request that applicants (1) meet performance and program objectives, and (2) satisfy expenditure requirements before new funding is sought.

Q. Do I need a Consultant(to manage my small cities project)?

A. If you are new to the program, have a very small staff, or have no staff that you can devote to the program, you may want to consider using a consultant to make sure that you meet all of the compliance requirements. Towns wishing to complete grants on their own should be sure to designate staff to be responsible for the program.

Q. Will DECD offer economic development training soon?

A. Yes, the training manual is in the development stage and we should be ready to begin training our grantees in October or November.

DECD's

Small Cities

Quarterly

A Community Development Newsletter from the Department of Economic and Community Development

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Community Development Week
Celebration

Building stronger communities takes hard work, collaboration, vision and dedication. This fact was recognized at the annual Community Development Block Grant Program Celebration, which was held at the Hartford Armory on March 31, 2005. The statewide celebration was hosted by the Connecticut Community Development Association (CCDA) and the City of Hartford and was well attended by legislators and community leaders. The entertainment was provided by the City of Hartford's CDBG recipient –The Hartford Conservatory Jazz Ensemble.

The Legislator of the Year award was presented to Eric D. Coleman, State Senator of the 2nd District. CCDA Peer Awards of Excellence were presented to cities and towns for projects that demonstrated effective partnerships, impact on the community, creativity and successful leveraging of private dollars.

Recipients of this years awards were: The award for the category of Partnership was presented to the City of Hartford, Homeowner retention program.

The project awarded for Impact went to The City of Hartford, Capable Kids-Hartford's rising stars -The Greater Hartford Association for Retarded Citizens (HARC).

The Creativity award was presented to the City of Waterbury, Young people Program. And the Leveraging award was given to the Town of Griswold/Borough of Jewett City for the Waste Water Treatment facility.



Picture of Larry Wagner, of L. Wagner & Associates, From the town, Cynthia Kata, Paul Brycki, Joe Dudek, Richard Janusko, and Veronica Hunter of DECD.

Fair Housing Workshop

On April 14, 2005, DECD sponsored a HUD training session on fair housing. The workshop, held at the MDC Training Center in Hartford, was conducted by Carl Harris from the local HUD office. His presentation reviewed the overarching goals and implementation of fair housing program from a small cities (vesus entitlement community) perspective. This insightful session was well attended by community leaders and consultants.



Carl Harris presenting



Environmental Training

On July 7, 2005, DECD's Small Cities Unit held an environmental workshop at the MDC Training facility in Hartford. This informative workshop included a presentation from Chris Higgins, HUD Environmental Specialist and Bill Frederick, DECD's Environmental Review Officer. Mr. Higgins reviewed the environmental requirements for the Small Cities Program, including flood plain issues and recent HUD changes to Environmental Regs at 24 CFR pt 58 and the requirements for Phase 1 studies. Bill Frederick reviewed the new Site and Building Report form that is now required to be submitted with all Small Cities program applications. For more information regarding the Small Cities program requirements please contact Bruce Sheridan at 860-270-8114.



MONITORING Reminder

DECD's new monitoring schedule began in July. *Please* be sure to have your files in order when staff come out to monitor!

Performance Measurements

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), working with COSCDA and others, has developed standardized performance measures for the CDBG, ESG, HOME, and HOPWA programs. HUD's CPD Notice 03-09, which is out for public comment until September 8, 2005, outlines objectives, outcomes and program indicators for these four formula programs that entitlement communities and states can utilize. The final notice is expected in December of 2005. DECD is currently developing performance measures that will complement and support these new anticipated federal guidelines and provide training to all grantees on the new system once they are finalized.

ENERGY STAR Bulletin

We are currently working on a Bulletin to promote ENERGY STAR performance guidelines. Mary Ellen Morgan, Director, CPD HUD Hartford has recently sent out a memo advocating the use of ENERGY STAR development. "Establishing ENERGY STAR as a guideline for housing rehab or new construction does not necessarily add construction costs. It does generate significant savings, requires no additional administration, and improves the quality of your affordable housing projects. Moreover, this is a goal of HUD, DOE, and EPA. HUD has adopted a 21-point Energy Action Plan aimed at encouraging energy efficiency in affordable housing."

DECD Continues with Outreach Efforts

As part of its ongoing outreach efforts, DECD is continuing to meet with local town officials to discuss community development needs and what the state can do to help. To date, DECD staff have already visited 87 towns and plans to visit the remaining communities by the end of the year.

These meetings provide municipal leaders the opportunity to learn more about DECD programs and services and to discuss potential projects that they may be interested in pursuing. In addition, it gives DECD staff a chance to meet and develop working relationships with key town personnel.

The outreach visits have been very productive and have already generated several new projects, some with towns that are working with DECD for the very first time.

Forums/Brown Bag Lunches

At the last DECD training session, it was suggested that the department host some Brown Bag Lunch meetings and forums as an opportunity for staff and grantees to work together and discuss issues such as programmatic concerns, reporting requirements, etc. We thought this was an excellent idea. To make the forums a worthwhile experience for all involved, the department is seeking suggestions as to what specific topics might be of interest to participants. Please contact your program representative to share your suggestions and let us know whether you can assist the department with securing locations for the forums.

We want to hear from you!

Budget Periods - Extensions

Timely expenditure of DECD-administered funds is a key indicator of performance for HUD. DECD has been very accommodating in recent years with budget extension requests from municipalities, but this has unfortunately contributed to poor spending rankings as determined by HUD. If Connecticut's performance continues to suffer, state funding could be jeopardized.

In an attempt to better understand the reasons why towns haven't been spending project funds, DECD has been sending out letters to those towns that have projects where under 50% of project funds have been expended after a year. The letters request that towns accelerate spending for these projects and provide a detailed plan as to why sufficient spending has not occurred, and how the town plans to get back on track to meet the original budget periods. If you are a town in receipt of this letter, please provide the department with a detailed response within the timeframe indicated by the letter. If you require additional assistance let DECD know at that time.

NEED TRAINING?

If there is a training area that you would like the Department to address please let Veronica Hunter know so that the department can organize what you need. 860-270-8236